

T H E C L E V E L A N D M U S E U M O F A R T

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On view in the prints and drawings galleries of the Cleveland Museum of Art through December is an exhibition of woodcuts, engravings, and etchings by German, Dutch, and Flemish masters dating from the 15th through the 17th centuries. The 230 works on exhibit, drawn from the Museum's collections, include some exceedingly rare prints, as well as particularly fine impressions of more familiar works.

Religious and mythological subjects inspired many of the earlier prints on view, while landscapes, portraits and scenes from contemporary life are more numerous among later, particularly 17th-century Dutch, works. Prominently displayed at the entrance to the exhibition are engraved portraits of the Hapsburg princes who ruled Germany and the Netherlands during the period when the prints were produced.

Early examples of woodblock printing in the exhibition include a woodcut illustration from the German Bible published by Anton Koberger in Nuremberg in 1483. Important woodcuts by Albrecht Altdorfer, Lucas Cranach, Hans Holbein, and Albrecht Dürer are also on display. Dürer's woodcuts include a splendid impression of The Riders on Four Horses from his series of illustrations of the Apocalypse published in 1498, and scenes from two other famous print series: The Large Passion and the Life of the Virgin, published in 1511.

Among a group of chiaroscuro woodcuts (printed in one or more colors from different blocks) is an equestrian portrait of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I by the German artist Hans Burgkmair (1473-1531). This unique impression is printed

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2-print exhibition

in black and white on blue hand-tinted paper and depicts the Emperor fully armed riding in a portico of Renaissance architecture.

A number of rare works are also to be seen in the group of engravings by German artists, particularly those of the Master E.S. (so called from the monogram with which he signed some of his plates), the most important German engraver of the second half of the 15th century. In the exhibition is his beautiful and complex work, St. John the Baptist Surrounded by the Evangelists and Four Fathers of the Latin Church, considered by print scholars as one of the greatest achievements in the history of engraving.

The great German artist Martin Schongauer (ca. 1440-1491), whose engravings were admired by generations of succeeding artists, especially Dürer, is represented by ten works, including a brilliant impression of his largest and most famous engraving, Christ Carrying His Cross.

The supreme master of the engraving technique, Albrecht Dürer, is represented by twelve engravings, among them his famous Virgin and Child with Monkey; Knight, Death and the Devil; and Melancolia. Dürer's superb draftsmanship can also be seen in four etchings, notably the powerful Christ on the Mount of Olives.

Among the few early printmakers interested in landscape for its own sake -- rather than as a background for figures -- were the early 16th-century German artists Augustin Hirschvogel and Hans Sebald Lautensack. Four of Hirschvogel's sensitively etched landscapes and one rare landscape etching by Lautensack are displayed in this exhibition.

The dominant printmaking technique of the 17th century -- etching -- is illustrated in works by the Flemish artists Anthony van Dyck and Jacob Jordaens and a number of Dutch masters, including the greatest practitioner of the medium -- Rembrandt. The genius of Rembrandt is exhibited in twenty-seven etchings, among

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3-print exhibition

them such masterpieces as The Three Crosses, the "Hundred Guilder Print," The Three Trees, and Christ Preaching.

Displayed with the group of works by Rembrandt is an unusual landscape etching by his contemporary, Hercules Seghers, a highly original artist and one of the first to experiment with color printing. His etching, entitled The Enclosed Valley, is printed on cloth and overpainted with brown and blue watercolor.

Among other Dutch etchings of note are landscapes by Jacob van Ruisdael, Esaias van de Velde, and Jan Both, and scenes of peasant life by Adriaen van Ostade. In addition to the prints mentioned, the exhibition contains a number of fine works by printmakers who are little known today.

The exhibition was organized by Museum Curator of Prints and Drawings Louise S. Richards and Assistant Curator Anne I. Lockhart.

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